

meeting	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE AUTHORITY	
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REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

HUMAN RESOURCE STRATEGY

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 For Members of the Fire Authority to consider the Human Resources Strategy, which reflects the key human resource issues facing the Fire Authority (both nationally and locally) over the short to medium term, and establishes priorities for the Service.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Strategy relates to the functional areas covered by the Human Resource function – namely Personnel Services, Occupational Health, Training and Development and Equalities.
- 2.2 Members will recall that in recent years approval has been given by the Authority to begin a process of integration across the Service's Personnel and Training sectors to initiate change and secure improvements. The appointment of a non-uniformed Human Resources Manager, Training and Development Manager and the Equalities Officer, the introduction of a comprehensive Occupational Health Service and Absence Management Policy are some examples of the change that has been implemented.
- 2.3 The Strategy has been developed through reference to many different sources. Many of the issues are raised in the recent White Paper "Our Fire & Rescue Service" and include such diverse issues as the implementation of Integrated Risk Management, the Integrated Personal Development System and a future industrial relations and pay framework. These issues having already been pre-empted to a large degree by the Bain Review. It has also been necessarily influenced by recent changes in employment legislation.
- 2.4 It also acknowledges and seeks to address more localised issues affecting the management and development of all employees of the Fire Authority.

2.5 Throughout the many strands that make up the Strategy, the underpinning principles are:-

- § **A focus on the employee**
- § **Involving staff and investing in their development**
- § **Underpinning personnel policies and practices with appropriate support and training for employees**
- § **Helping staff prepare for and manage change**
- § **High quality leadership at all levels**
- § **Development in productive relationships with representative bodies that enable their participation in the achievement of organisational objectives**
- § **Results orientation (performance management)**
- § **Clearly defining the roles, priorities and objectives of key areas of HR activity**
- § **Valuing continuous learning, improvement and innovation**
- § **Support in the development and active management of a performance culture for the Service.**

3 REPORT

- 3.1 The Human Resources Strategy represents the first of its kind for the Authority. It sets out a vision for Human Resources activity in the Service which aims to place the Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service at the forefront of Human Resource practise in the British Fire Service through the development of progressive and flexible personnel policies and procedure, the personal and organisational development of staff and open, constructive involvement with employees. Implicit in the Strategy is recognition of the major challenges involved in achieving a fundamental and significant change in the Service whilst retaining cohesion, morale and motivation in the workplace.
- 3.2 The Strategy seeks to create an underpinning direction for the Service at a time when change would seem to be the only constant in a complex and turbulent environment. The value of such a Strategy at this time is to establish a framework for the future in which key Human Resource priorities are clearly defined, resources can be effectively targeted, and which can provide a specific reference point against which progress can be monitored.
- 3.3 There are clear challenges that must be met to create a culture and a working environment that will accommodate the needs of the receivers of service and those who deliver it alike. The development and local conditions of service agreements, targets for the recruitment and development of women and minority groups, reduction in ill-health retirements, other aspects of equality of opportunity, flexibility in working patterns and retained parity are not going to be met unless there is a cohesive approach to HR issues.

- 3.4 Legislation relating to employment practices has already changed substantially in recent years and is set for more and greater reform in the future. The removal of the exemption for the Fire Service from the Disabilities Discrimination Act is a clear example of only one aspect of change that will have major implications. These issues will be picked up as part of the development of the policies and practices required to secure greater equality and diversity in the organisation. The changes to the Fireman's Pension Scheme promised by Government will also have significant implications for the Service.
- 3.5 The adoption of the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) by the CFBAC is seen as the biggest reform of the approach to recruitment and development of Fire Service personnel since the war. IPDS is intended to cater for the needs of non-uniformed personnel as well as their uniformed colleagues. The change from rank to role and the introduction of a competence-based framework for individual performance are significant changes from existing practices. Early assessment of potential and the means to fast-track suitable candidates are detailed in the White Paper as is the removal of the single-tier uniformed promotion system.
- 3.6 Essential to the strategy and its success are the issues relating to employee support mechanisms and the extension of the existing occupational health provision, which still remains one of the best in the country. Greater opportunities will be sought to extend the management aspects of the Service to deal more effectively with prevention and early rehabilitation, and to take advantage of alternative means of complementary treatment.
- 3.7 The strategy recognises the inter-relationships between recruitment, development and training, equalities, personnel management and their supporting policies. That fact was recognised some two years ago when those disciplines were brought together under a single Head of Human Resources.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 No financial implications arise directly from the strategy at this stage. However, it is undoubtedly the case that there are resource implications arising from its implementation and these will be reported to the Fire Authority as they arise.

5 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Personnel implications for the Service as a whole are contained within the body of the report. The "rolling out" of individual aspects of the Strategy will undoubtedly generate changes to working practices, conditions of service and other areas of human resource activity. It would be pre-emptive to try to predict the nature of such changes at this stage. However any proposed changes will be subject to consultation with the relevant representative bodies through the JNCP structure and will be reported to the CFA, as appropriate.

5.2 In view of the scope and impact of the proposals it is likely that the current structure of the Personnel and Training sections will need to be reviewed and roles re-defined, particularly through the implementation stage. This may require additional resources being made available to ensure that existing work plans and support structures are maintained.

6 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The implications for equal opportunities are contained within the body of the report. It should be stressed that the implementation of many aspects of the Strategy will strengthen existing work in this area.

7 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The risk management implications of failing to adopt a clear and cohesive direction for the management of Human Resources are made clear throughout the recent White Paper document. If individual fire authorities are not able to show a positive commitment to change in this key area of their activity then the changes themselves will be imposed either centrally or through a regional body.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 That Members adopt the Human Resource Strategy.

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION

None

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